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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE MINOR ARTS OF DECORATION.

BY JAMES CARRUTHERS.

NOW that molded relief objects are being extensively used on walls, it is desirable for decorators to know of a composition which will keep moist for the required time, assume the requisite solidity, present a smooth surface, and receive color well. The following is the process of preparation: Mix one pound of finely powdered lime with water into a thick paste, and add half a pound of Venice turpentine. When the mixture has stood for some time work it up with suitable quantities of fine white chalk and one or more pigments. Broken colors will look well, as, for instance, a green compounded of yellow, blue, umber and a dash of red. The smooth surface, which it takes on hardening, may be so polished as to present the appearance of marble. The material may be rolled into sheets, which may be attached with any glutinous substance to the wall surface to be decorated. An excellent composition, which may be rolled into supple sheets and affixed with glue to any flat or rounded mural surface, is made of a solution of glue, oil and resin mixed while hot with glycerine and paper pulp, and colored as required.

Another is made of wood pulp, glue and oil being the other constituents. Another preparation consists of the mixture of twenty parts of wood tar, thirty-two of shellac and thirty-two of dry and finely pulverized asbestos, flax, cotton, or wood or paper pulp, constantly stirred in a boiler at a temperature of from 100° to 200° Fahr. For a harder mass a less amount of tar must be used.

For an extremely hard composition, when it has finally set, add one part by weight of mineral wax (paraffine ozocerite), and decrease the quantity of asbestos. Any of these compositions will, under the mould, show the sharpness of finish appropriate to good carving. There is nothing in floriated, flower, or arabesque forms which may not be carried out upon them. When hardened they receive color well, and the surfaces may be given a polish equal to marble.

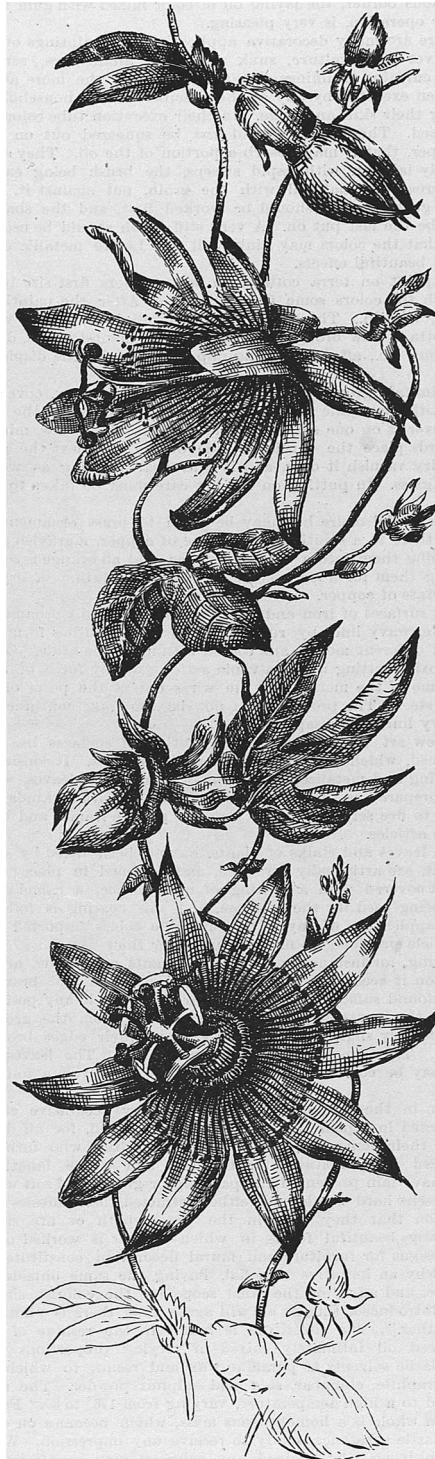
Photographing likenesses on china ware as centre or border decorations, and this in colors, is regarded as a secret art, in the possession of but few individuals, but we are enabled to state it succinctly and clearly. We can conceive no decoration of a tea or dinner service more attractive, than one which reproduces, among other forms of ornament, the heads of the members of a family. It was the pride of the wealthy of medieval times to have the portraits of husband, wife and children set amongst carved, scroll, or foliage decoration on articles of furniture. On chinaware these are even more imperishable than on wood, when fixed by the sunlight in the way we are about to describe.

The process consists in a transfer of a likeness to the chinaware from the ordinary negative. This negative is coated with a fusible glass by the heat of a common cupelling furnace, and the negative is then conveyed to a dark room and coated with iodised collodion. Before the collodionised surface is quite dry, a sharp point of a needle is run along the outline of the figure, and the plate is then immersed in water containing five per cent. of glycerine. The film of collodion soon floats on the liquid. This film is skillfully removed, when its silvery surface is changed to a golden hue with a few drops of chloride of gold. Next it is dipped in a solution of metallic salts which, by the action of fire, yield certain colors according to the operator's wish. The film is now carefully laid on the portion of the china article to be adorned, and it attaches itself by means of diluted glycerine, which is laid on with a soft brush. The glycerine is then coated with a transparent vitreous flux, and the figure becomes permanently fixed. The same process may be applied to fix the photograph on glass.

Wood may be given the appearance of metal, and even assume permanently the aspect of a true metallic mirror by the following process: The wood is first immersed for three or four days, according to its permeability, in a caustic alkaline lye (calcareous soda), at a temperature of from 75° to 90°. From thence it is to be passed into a bath of hydrosulphite of calcium, to which is added, after twenty-four hours, a concentrated solution of sulphur in caustic potash. The bath, which is at a temperature of from 35° to 50°, is maintained for forty-eight hours. Finally the wood is immersed from thirty to fifty hours, accordingly to its density, in a hot solution 35° to 50° of acetate of lead. The process is a long one, but the effect is surprising. On drying the wood at a moderate temperature, it assumes a metallic lustre, a burnisher of hard wood being used; and on being rubbed afterwards with a piece of lead, tin or zinc, and then polished with a glass or porcelain burnisher, takes a mirror-like appearance. The metallic surface is strong and very resistant.

We proceed to place before our readers a new process of mineral painting, in some respects analogous to distemper painting. It offers facilities for the rapid execution of scrolls, arabesques and other designs, and is applicable to composition

material such as lincrusta, to papier maché, tile, glass, slate and marble. The ground painted on is to be kept moist. The design is painted with pigments treated with alkaline solutions of potash or ammonia, and the colors are afterwards fixed by repeated sprays of diluted potash or water glass, after which carbonate of ammonia or benzine is applied to the surface. Care is to be exercised that the process of fixing is not car-



PASSION FLOWER, BY H. E. DEAN.

ried too far, as otherwise a slight efflorescence is formed. It is best to use a fine water spray of distilled or rain water in moistening the surface. The colors are to be kept in glass bottles in a moist, pasty condition.

The colors used are those which have been found available for the stereochromic process, which contain admixtures such as the hydrates of alumina, magnesia or silica, oxide of zinc, carbonate of baryta and fellspar, it quite smooth. The effect of thus treating the centre of large panes, and adding a colored diaphanous border, the laying on of color mixed with gum being an after operation, is very pleasing.

There are many decorative applications of paintings on silk and velvet for furniture, sunk panels on architraves, screens, cabinet curtains or linings, &c., which are all the more attractive when executed by any of the members of a household as evincing their skill and taste. In their execution tube colors are to be used. These colors should first be squeezed out on blotting paper, that it may absorb a portion of the oil. They are to be boldly laid on with rapid sweeps, the brush being carried right across the material with the grain, not against it. The highest general colors should be worked first, and the shadows should be the last put on. A very stiff brush should be used for plush, that the colors may sink well in. Lustre metallic colors produce beautiful effects.

To paint on terra cotta with water colors first size it and mix with the colors some Chinese white. After the painting is finished, varnish. The many beautiful relief designs in which terra cotta is now brought out, whether in mantel pieces, dados, medallions, &c., afford tempting opportunities for the display of color.

To imitate ground or figured glass on a window, cover the panes with diaphanous varnish; cut some figured net to the same size; cover it on one side with the varnish. In a few minutes afterwards place the varnished side of the net next the glass. When dry varnish it over, and it will bear washing as well as ground glass. In putting on the net care must be taken to keep it even.

A beautiful moire hue may be given to brass ornaments by boiling them in a solution of sulphate of copper, a grayish green by dipping them into a bath of copper, and an orange green by plunging them for a few seconds in a warm solution of crystallized acetate of copper.

The surfaces of iron and steel may be beautifully ornamented with fine, wavy lines by rubbing them with brushes formed of wires of different metals, and coated with magnetic oxide. Owing to the oxide setting up a galvanic action and by force of attrition, some of the metal from the wires enters the pores of the iron or steel. The process must not be too long continued, or the wavy lines will disappear.

A new art process for the decoration of surfaces has been introduced, which is calculated to attract interest. It consists in the drying and metalized treatment of plants and leaves, which are so prepared as to be fixed on grounds of various kinds, and applied to fire screens, dados, plaques, picture-frames and other suitable articles.

The leaves and stalks of plants, having been dried by artificial heat, are artistically arranged, and fastened in place; they are next covered with a coating of gum arabic, a camel's hair brush being used for the purpose, and this coating is followed by the application of any of the metallic colors imported with the vehicle provided by manufacturers for their use.

Taking, for instance, a panel, the plants and leaves are arranged on it according to a set design. Leaves and branches will be found sufficiently supple for arrangement in any position. Some of the leaves may completely stand out from the ground, others be only slightly attached, and have their edges brought forward. The attachment is made with glue. The leaves and stems may be colored according to nature, or given a uniform tint.

Just in the proportion that satisfactory decorative effects are lessened in expense is decorative art extended, for all desire to have their homes made beautiful. The critics who formerly denounced all substitutes for the real and whose fanaticism would have fain prevented the painting or graining of soft woods to represent hard woods have either retracted their heresies from conviction that they were in the wrong path or are silent. The many beautiful forms in which leather is worked up in relief designs for furniture and mural decoration constitutes no reason why an imitative material, having the same outside appearance, and affording the same scope for the colorist, should not be introduced, though all will agree that there is "nothing like leather." The substitute is found in the residue of fine cotton-seed oil intimately mixed in varying proportions with such volatile solvents as paraffine wax and resins, to which are added graphite, cinnabar, soot and sulphur powder. The mass is heated to a high temperature, varying from 176° to 302° Fahr., until the whole is a homogeneous mass, which becomes on cooling a plastic substance, ready to receive any impression. While in fusion it may be stained any color or may be afterwards painted; it has all the elasticity of real leather.

EMBROIDERY.

A CHOICE piece of embroidery in a room has often a wonderfully enlivening effect, a fanciful and graceful design showing the artist's own touch and manipulation, contrasting well with more formal objects, besides which the bright colors introduced worked on a cloth thrown carelessly on an article of furniture, will often redeem it from the character of sombreness. Renaissance embroidered scroll work, in gold and rich colors, serves admirably for borders of portieres. We lately noticed a portiere of crimson stuff of dark tone, exquisitely set off with a superb gold vine-like pattern of oak leaves and acorns. The corners were worked in patterns of plain gold, crimson and green, being different at each corner. Another border on a brown portiere was of an elegant and graceful pattern of branches of olive of warm sunny green, with leaves and berries in gold running over it; the horizontal band mingled bronze and green in a leaf pattern.

In ceiling decoration all strong colors should be definitely separated from each other by light lines, fillets or small moldings. If the cornice presents any small flat surfaces, a simple conventional flower or geometrical pattern can often be used to great advantage, care being taken not to make it too prominent, and in no way to form a dark molded frame for a mass of light tinted ceiling. It is not a very costly matter to lay on to a ceiling having small wood moldings formed into panels, and painted, paper fitting the panels and filled in with some very light diaper paper of stencil enrichment fitting the panels.



CHINESE DRAPERY, DESIGNED BY AUGUST LEROY.